DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 336 743 CS 213 004

AUTHOR Raphael, Taffy E.; And Others
TITLE Teaching Literacy through Student Book Clubs: A First-Year Teacher's Experience. Elementary Subjects Center Series No. 41.
INSTITUTION Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects, East Lansing, MI.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE Aug 91
CONTRACT G0098C0226
NOTE 33p.
AVAILABLE FROM Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects, Institute for Research on Teaching, 252 Erickson Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824-1034 ($3.00).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Childrens Literature; Classroom Research; Cooperative Learning; *Discussion Groups; Grade 4; Grade 5; Intermediate Grades; Literacy; *Literature Appreciation; *Reading Comprehension; Reading Writing Relationship; Student Motivation; *Whole Language Approach
IDENTIFIERS *Book Clubs; Collaborative Learning; Response to Literature

ABSTRACT

This paper describes the experience of a fourth- and fifth-grade, first-year teacher's participation in the Book Club Project of the Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects. The Book Club included the use of high-quality children's literature, opportunities for response to literature in multiple ways, and instruction that focused on different ways to develop an appreciation for experiences with literature. The paper first describes the four components that make up the Book Club program: reading, writing, discussion (i.e., student-led small-group and whole-class), and instruction. The paper then focuses on a 6-week folktale unit, using the unit as the context for discussing the issues faced by the teacher in moving toward a literature-based instructional approach, the needs of the students, and how their instructional support helped facilitate their growth with both comprehension strategy use and with response to the literature they read. Students' growth is described in terms of "what to share" during their student-led discussions and "how to share it." Transcripts of students' small group discussions or Book Clubs are used to provide a window into their interactions around the literature selections read, while samples of students' writing and drawings are used to reflect individual responses. In addition, transcripts and writing samples are used to describe progress in question-asking, seeking clarification, overall participation, use of personal experiences, and links to other texts. (One figure, 1 table, and 3 teaching ideas are included; 17 references are attached.) (PRA)

IRT
price
$3.00

ED356748

Elementary Subjects Center
Series No. 41

TEACHING LITERACY THROUGH STUDENT BOOK CLUBS: A FIRST-YEAR TEACHER'S EXPERIENCE

Taffy E. Raphael, Virginia J. Goatley,
Susan I. McMahon, and Deborah A. Woodman

Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects

Institute for Research on Teaching

College of Education

Michigan State University

CS213004

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

MSU is an affirmative action/equal opportunity institution

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Elementary Subjects Center
Series No. 41

TEACHING LITERACY THROUGH STUDENT BOOK CLUBS: A FIRST-YEAR TEACHER'S EXPERIENCE

Taffy E. Raphael, Virginia J. Goatley,
Susan I. McMahon, and Deborah A. Woodman

Published by

The Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects
Institute for Research on Teaching
252 Erickson Hall
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan 48824-1034

August 1991

This work is sponsored in part by the Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects, Institute for Research on Teaching, Michigan State University. The Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects is funded primarily by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the position, policy, or endorsement of the Office or Department (Cooperative Agreement No. G0098C0226).

Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects

The **Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects** was awarded to Michigan State University in 1987 after a nationwide competition. Funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, the Elementary Subjects Center is a major project housed in the Institute for Research on Teaching (IRT). The program focuses on conceptual understanding, higher order thinking, and problem solving in elementary school teaching of mathematics, science, social studies, literature, and the arts. Center researchers are identifying exemplary curriculum, instruction, and evaluation practices in the teaching of these school subjects; studying these practices to build new hypotheses about how the effectiveness of elementary schools can be improved; testing these hypotheses through school-based research; and making specific recommendations for the improvement of school policies, instructional materials, assessment procedures, and teaching practices. Research questions include, What content should be taught when teaching these subjects for understanding and use of knowledge? How do teachers concentrate their teaching to use their limited resources best? and In what ways is good teaching subject matter- specific?

The work is designed to unfold in three phases, beginning with literature review and interview studies designed to elicit and synthesize the points of view of various stakeholders (representatives of the underlying academic disciplines, intellectual leaders and organizations concerned with curriculum and instruction in school subjects, classroom teachers, state- and district-level policymakers) concerning ideal curriculum, instruction, and evaluation practices in these five content areas at the elementary level. Phase II involves interview and observation methods designed to describe current practice, and in particular, best practice as observed in the classrooms of teachers believed to be outstanding. Phase II also involves analysis of curricula (both widely used curriculum series and distinctive curricula developed with special emphasis on conceptual understanding and higher order applications), as another approach to gathering information about current practices. In Phase III, models of ideal practice will be developed, based on what has been learned and synthesized from the first two phases, and will be tested through classroom intervention studies.

The findings of Center research are published by the IRT in the Elementary Subjects Center Series. Information about the Center is included in the IRT Communication Quarterly (a newsletter for practitioners) and in lists and catalogs of IRT publications. For more information, to receive a list or catalog, or to be placed on the IRT mailing list to receive the newsletter, please write to the Editor, Institute for Research on Teaching, 252 Erickson Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan 48824-1034.

Co-directors:	Jere E. Brophy and Penelope L. Peterson
Senior Researchers:	Patricia Cianciolo, Sandra Hollingsworth, Magdalene Lampert, Wanda May, Richard Prawat, Ralph Putnam, Cheryl Rosaen, Kathleen Roth, Suzanne Wilson
Editor:	Sandra Gross
Editorial Assistant:	Brian H. Bode

Abstract

This paper describes the experience of a fourth/fifth-grade, first-year teacher during her participation as part of the Book Club Project of the Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects. Book Club was the literacy environment which included the use of high-quality children's literature, opportunities for response to literature in multiple ways, and instruction that focused on different ways to develop an appreciation for experiences with literature.

In this paper, we describe the four components that make up the Book Club program: reading, writing, discussion (i.e., student-led small-group and whole-class), and instruction. We then focus on a six-week folktale unit during the fall semester of the academic year, using the unit as the context for discussing the issues faced by the teacher in moving toward a literature-based instructional approach, the needs of her students, and how their instructional support helped facilitate their growth with both comprehension strategy use and with response to the literature they read.

Students' growth is described in terms of **what to share** during their student-led discussions and **how to share it**. Transcripts of students' small group discussions, or Book Clubs, provide a window into their interactions around the literature selections read, while samples of students' writing and drawings reflect their individual response. Through the use of transcripts of their discussions and the writing samples, we describe progress in their question-asking, seeking clarification, overall participation, use of personal experiences, and links to other texts.

TEACHING LITERACY THROUGH STUDENT BOOK CLUBS: A FIRST-YEAR TEACHER'S EXPERIENCE[1]

Taffy E. Raphael, Virginia J. Goatley,
Susan I. McMahon, and Deborah A. Woodman[2]

In early October Mei, Ken, Eva, and Joshua were students in first-year teacher Deb Woodman's fourth/fifth-grade classroom in an urban, community school in a midsized, midwestern city. Students in the school reflect different ethnic backgrounds, including Hispanic, Asian, African-American, Native American, and Caucasian. Many are from single-parent families, and over two-thirds receive federal assistance such as the free meals program. Mei and her peers participated in their third student-led discussion group, their "Book Club," after reading the first five chapters of *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes* by Eleanor Coerr (1977). Their conversation began with Ken sharing his Reading Log entry, a sequence of pictures depicting ideas from the story that he thought were important and wanted to discuss. He finished saying, "Chapter 5. Her friend gave her one paper crane and told her to make more. She told her to make a thousand." The only response from any of the students was Eva's question, "A thousand what?" Ken said, "a thousand more," then Mei shared her ideas. Before anyone could respond, Ken turned to Joshua.

Ken: Your turn, Joshua

Joshua: I don't got nothing to read.

Ken: You gotta tell about/ go / you gotta tell about your pictures. Talk!

Eva: You copycat, Joshua

---

[1]This paper will appear as a chapter in B. E. Cullinan (Ed.). (in press). Literature across the curriculum: Making it happen. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

[2]Taffy E. Raphael, professor of teacher education and educational psychology at Michigan State University, is a senior researcher in the Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects where she codirects the Education Book Club Project. Virginia J. Goatley, a doctoral candidate in Educational Psychology at MSU, is a research assistant with the project. Susan I. McMahon, assistant professor of teacher education, University of Wisconsin, Madison, is codirector of the project. Deborah A. Woodman is a fourth/fifth-grade teacher at Allen Street School in Lansing, Michigan.

Ken: Talk!

After listening to this exchange, one of the researchers in the classroom suggested that Joshua could share "just a little bit" of what he had written and drawn. Joshua looked up, smiled and nodded, and the researcher moved to a different group. Later, the transcript of the students' discussion revealed that Joshua still had not shared. Rather, Eva read her entry. After Eva's turn, Ken again said, "Now it's Joshua's turn!" followed by Mei's comment, "Joshua's turn, your turn." Finally, Ken took Joshua's paper, read from it and described the pictures; Eva responded by claiming that he copied it from her.

Most observers would agree that the quality of interaction demonstrated here left room for improvement on multiple levels. Our own observations helped confirm this classroom's need for our Book Club project and reinforced our goals. In this paper, we share what we learned from our efforts at moving away from a more traditional, teacher-directed reading program to the social-interactive approach that characterized Book Club. First, we describe the project's goals and participants. Next, we focus on the four instructional components. The last two sections focus on how Book Club looked in Deb's classroom. Through examples of instruction, conversation, and students' writing, we show how the four components work together over the course of a six-week folktale unit, then we trace the development of students' questioning abilities across the academic year. Underlying our discussion is how Deb struggled with the issues faced by both first-year and experienced teachers: tensions between district mandates, parental expectations, and good literacy instruction; building independent and critical readers; helping students develop skills to engage in the social aspects of literacy; and relating literacy

learning to other school subjects; in short, bringing Mei and her peers into a community of readers.

The Book Club Project: Why?

The participants in the Book Club project shared a common vision of the goals of literacy instruction: (a) promoting students' understanding, enjoyment, and choosing to engage in literary activities; (b) helping students learn to acquire, synthesize, and evaluate information from text; and (c) helping students develop a langauge to talk about literacy. There has been a growing sentiment toward literature-based literacy instruction over the past decade, with arguments that students need to belong to a community of readers (Smith, 1988), recognize their role in author/reader relationships (Graves & Hansen, 1983; Tierney & LaZansky, 1980), and have opportunities in school to participate in authentic reading and writing events (Au, Scheu, Kawakami, & Herman, 1990; Fitzgerald, in press; Short & Pierce, 1990).

In the fall, Deb had talked of her ideal reading program, one that would include quality literature, active student interaction, critical thinking, and oral language connections. Even before she was sure she had a teaching position, she said, "I started looking into trade books [and] catalogues to order books, [because I wanted to teach] critical thinking . . . [with] the kids . . . more in control . . . [and] able to be a more active part in their own learning." When she thought about her role in such a program, she said she would "first present, and model, and make the instructions clear and let it go. Let them work it out for themselves, that's when learning takes place, and it does, everytime. . . . I picture the kids becoming more part of the program . . . it's their learning too." She was adamant about not wanting to repeat what she saw in her student teaching, where "you know, you have your lower kids in *Moonbeams* or whatever, and your middle kids, and then your higher kids . . . assign workbook pages this day and so many,

and make sure you keep with the schedule . . . the test at the end of the week. I wanted to do something more than that!"

Despite a clear sense of where she wanted to go with her program, Deb expressed concern about how to begin and whether or not such a program would provide students with the skills and strategies they needed. She noted that she was concerned that they had had little experience with literature as the basis for their reading program and little to no experience working collaboratively in student-led groups. "It's like I thought, I can't picture these kids carrying on a serious conversation about a book." She reported asking herself,

> Could it be done? What were the expectations? Could they be accomplished? . . . I had that fear that much as [Book Club] liberated me to get away from tradition, I had the fear that the skills wouldn't be covered, because each grade level has their own curriculum statements and expectations, and I thought, how am I going to cover these skills? . . . I'm scared to death, . . . I can't do it.

The Book Club Team

The Book Club team, codirected by Sue McMahon and Taffy Raphael, served as a source of two-directional support as the program was developed and studied during its beginnings. The program is designed for a classroom with one teacher and no assistance. However, during development, the researchers (i.e., Sue, Taffy, Ginny Goatley, Jessica Bentley, & Fenice Boyd) provided extra sets of eyes in the two classrooms, leadership in close analysis of the events within the literacy program, and guidance toward instructional possibilities. The teachers (i.e., Deb Woodman and Laura Pardo) provided insights into the students' ongoing interactions and related instruction, the relationship between Book Club and other subject areas, and the practicality of the approach. Since the focus of the first year was to develop Book Club collaboratively, we met as a whole team and in various subgroups. The entire group met once a week to share ideas for classroom instruction, reflect on students' progress in general, discuss

specific problems or issues that had arisen over the week, and keep informed of each other's activities in the two classrooms.

One subgroup was based on participants within the two separate classrooms. For example, two researchers, Taffy and Ginny, visited Deb's classroom once or twice a week each, on separate days. We took field notes, videotaped and audiotaped whole-group lessons and Book Club sessions, and met with Deb to talk about what we saw. Another subgroup of research staff met to work with data analysis. Subgroups varied depending on particular needs (e.g., classroom considerations, presentations at conferences, writing articles).

Finally, the students themselves contributed in many ways. From the beginning, they were part of the research team, informed that they were going to help us learn about better ways to teach reading. They willingly engaged in formal and informal interviews, saved copies of their writing in and outside of Book Club, and in the case of three students, began to take field notes because, as Randy stated, "Ken was saying some really important things and I thought we should have it written down." Randy and two other students recorded what they and other students said, as well as what had been written on the chalk board. Such student involvement supported the goals of the program in general and Deb's belief of the importance of students "becoming more part of the program and contributing to their own learning."

The Book Club Program

As evidenced by the earlier exchange between Ken, Mei, Joshua, and Eva, these students could benefit greatly from learning how to engage in response groups. Their session suggested a lack of knowledge about both **what to share** and **how to share it**. There seemed to be a lack of respect for one another's ideas, little evidence of follow-up or in-depth questioning, a narrowness of ways of sharing ideas (i.e., read aloud, go on to the next person), and little

variation in purpose for the discussion. In listening to groups of students in this and other schools, we found that these interactions were not unusual.

We established a 4-component approach to help address students' development in these areas and provide Deb with the support yet she wanted in her reading program. She wished to move away from a narrow definition of the mandated district curriculum materials toward a strong literature-based reading program, yet she wanted to be sure that she addressed instruction toward the skill and strategy development her students needed and the parents and district personnel might expect. The four components focused on support for the students' Book Club: (1) reading, (2) writing, (3) community share, and (4) instruction (see Table 1). While these components interacted with each other to support and develop students' abilities to respond to their selections, for the convenience of the reader, we first address each one in turn.

Reading

Obviously, to be able to participate in a discussion about books, students need to have read the relevant material. To prepare for their Book Clubs, and give students of different abilities the support they need, Deb used several different opportunities for reading, including partner reading, choral reading, oral reading/listening, silent reading, and reading at home the evening prior to Book Club. The students' Reading Logs replaced traditional "workbooks," containing blank pages for representing ideas through pictures, charts, and maps and lined pages that could be adapted for writing reflections on elements such as story events and characters, interesting words or language use on the part of the author, funny sections including dialogue and descriptions, and so forth.

Deb was conscious of the district reading requirements, noting that "each grade level has its own curriculum statement and expectations" and that her objectives included both "getting kids to the point where they feel comfortable talking about books [and] gain the necessary skills

Table 1

BOOK CLUB COMPONENTS

READING	INSTRUCTION	DISCUSSION		WRITING
		COMMUNITY SHARE	BOOK CLUB	
FLUENCY COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES: -predicting -sequencing -organizing -identifying important ideas -drawing conclusions -mapping VOCABULARY	MODELING EXPLAINING STRUCTURING READING ALOUD REINFORCING	*What* to Share *How* to Share NEW STRATEGY INTRODUCTION PRACTICING PREPARING SHARING CRITIQUING	DISCUSSING REFLECTING QUESTIONING CLARIFYING RELATING IDEAS	PREPARING -planning -organizing RECORDING -genre/structures -synthesis MODIFYING -revising -refining FORMS OF REPRESENTATION -mapping -pictures -timelines -charts

[including those] that are required for them to pass the MEAP [Michigan Educational Assessment Program]: main idea, getting the facts from the situation, sequencing, etc." She hoped her students would learn to "maintain a Book Club, discuss, question, and feel successful at expressing themselves." Deb did not have students participate in formal vocabulary lessons each time they read. Rather, she asked students to note in Reading Logs confusing or interesting words to discuss. She included comprehension activities such as character mapping, sequencing, question generation, and other activities often associated with more traditional reading programs, but these were either selected by the student, or prompted by Deb's sense of what was relevant to understanding and discussing their selections.

In addition to reading the Book Club book(s), students participated in a weekly library program and a daily, school-wide DEAR program, ordered books from different school publishing catalogues, and used trade and textbooks in science and social studies. Many of these reading opportunities gave Deb a chance to examine individual students' reading fluency.

Writing

Researchers have suggested that writing and reading share basic cognitive and social processes (Shanahan & Lomax, 1986; Tierney & Pearson, 1983). McMahon and Raphael (1990) found that students' writing prior to Book Club influenced their Book Club discussions and that these discussions influenced the amount and type of information included in later writing activities. Thus, Deb encouraged the students to write about their ideas before each Book Club, using their Reading Log as a permanent record of their ideas. The writing sometimes related to strategies commonly associated with reading. Other times, she suggested students use writing to reflect on what they have learned, how their ideas have changed, or to compose original stories that extend or relate to ones they have previously read.

TEACHING IDEA--Have students use logs to record their ideas and organize their thoughts to discuss with other students. Use both free and focused writing. Focused writing can include,

(1) BOOK/CHAPTER CRITIQUE--Sometimes when I'm reading, I think to myself, "This is absolutely GREAT!!" Other times I think to myself, "If I were the author, I sure would do this differently." In my log I can write about things the author did really well and things he or she might want to do better.

(2) CHARACTER MAP--I can think about a character I really liked (or really didn't like or thought was interesting). The map can show what I think the character looked like, things the character did, how the character went with other characters, what made this character interesting, and anything else that I think is important!

Community Share

We found that students benefitted from large-group discussions especially in two circumstances. First, Deb often used Community Share session to raise students' consciousness about issues or events they would be reading. In one example, students were to read Sally Ride's (1986) account of her trip in the space shuttle, *To Space and Back*. They had also studied gravity in a recent science unit. Thus, Deb used Community Share as a time to remind students about what they already knew and to prompt their thinking about both the fun and frustration of zero gravity. Students read next the relevant section of the book and later wrote about fun/frustrating zero gravity experiences, recording their ideas in their Reading Logs for their Book Club discussions.

A second reason for Community Share was to give each Book Club members the opportunity to share with the rest of their peers ideas that had grown out of their discussion. This was a time for students to learn from each other and for Deb to see where they might have some gaps in their knowledge. For example, students read Lois Lowry's Newbery (1989) Award book, *Number the Stars*. In one Book Club, Crystal had asked why Hitler would want to attack

Denmark. A student who had either completely missed the point in the selection or who was perhaps overly sensitive because of the beginning of the Persian Gulf war responded that, "The king was very rich and had a lot of oil. The other people were very poor and didn't have any oil and needed to get the wells. So he started a war." When this emerged in the Community Share, Deb and Taffy, who had been observing that day, realized the importance of a brief history lesson before students continued with the book.

Instruction

Observations of the students' early Book Club participation helped us determine the need for instruction in both **what to share** and **how to share it**. To help students see a range of possibilities for **what to share**, the content of a share session, Deb modeled various rhetorical (e.g., text structure, story elements), comprehension, and synthesis activities, during the Community Share, whole-group format. For example, rhetorical elements were modeled through exploration of how authors created characters (e.g., modeling character maps and using them during discussion), how authors organized their texts (e.g., sequencing, comparing, and contrasting different books), and how readers evaluate texts (e.g., critiques). Comprehension strategies modeled included prediction, question-asking, monitoring, summarizing, and drawing upon prior knowledge and related texts. Discourse synthesis was modeled through discussion of overarching themes, common features across texts, and time lines.

To help students develop the social skills needed, or **how to share**, Deb focused on both general interaction (e.g., turn taking, listening to one another) and specific ways to expand upon one another's ideas (e.g., asking follow-up questions, asking for clarification, relating to other ideas). Deb involved the students in critiquing Book Club interactions in different ways. Some discussions were videotaped, some audiotaped, and some were available in typed transcripts.

Deb used these different versions throughout the year to have students consider both what the participants had done particularly well and what they might want to improve.

TEACHING IDEA--Tape record a Book Club discussion in which the students are participating. Have them critique their discussion both for what they had done well--such as (a) asking good questions, (b) elaborating on each other's ideas, and (c) taking turns--and for areas to improve--such as (a) off-task behavior, (b) overreliance on written response, and (c) dominant or "bossy" participants. This can be a fun way to address the **how to share** problems you are having in the classroom discussions.

Components Working Together

Each of the four Book Club project components operates in interaction with the others, and all support students' development of the abilities to respond to a variety of selections and to develop their own sense as a reader and an author. For example, in one unit on folktales, students read, wrote, and discussed a variety of books including Aardema's (1981) *Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain* and (1975) *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears*, Clement's (1986) *The Painter and the Wild Swans*, Heyer's (1986) *The Weaving of a Dream*, and San Souci's (1987) *The Enchanted Tapestry*. Toward the end of the unit, Deb held a Community Share session to focus on features of folktales. The students used their knowledge base of folktales to create a list of elements common to all the stories, then used this list of features as they created their own folktales. Students then held Book Clubs to discuss how these features were used in different folktales, building a basis for later writing of their own folktales. However, many opportunities to read and talk about the folktales led up to this Community Share session.

During the Book Club period every day, Deb and the students used the various components for many purposes. For example, students had been reading Heyer's *The Weaving of a Dream* and San Souci's *The Enchanted Tapestry* throughout the week, writing about and discussing the stories daily. On Friday, a compare/contrast activity involved these two similar folktales

which were drawn from the same oral story but written by two different author/illustrator teams. Five activities made up the one-hour lesson that day: (1) Deb gave students some time to reread the two texts, (2) Deb modeled comparing and contrasting, (3) students did a compare and contrast activity in the reading logs, (4) Book Club discussions occurred, and (5) a Community Share about folktale features was held. The critical thinking skills required in comparing/contrasting the two books gave students the opportunity to develop or practice reading comprehension strategies, identify common rhetorical features, and relate elements to other folktales they had read.

In the following segment, Mei and her peers focused on comparing elements of plot and the illustrations of the story following the Community Share and Reading Log activities. Their conversation highlights how the leadership shifted among the students as they talked about the characters and a story event and as they began to critique the pictures. Their conversation further illustrated how the students were beginning to "co-construct" their response as they worked together to identify important events and similarities and differences.

Eva: I thought it was exactly the same as *Weaving of a Dream*, 'cause it had the same characters, but not the same names. It wasn't, it wasn't **exactly** like *Weaving of a Dream*, but just where the parts are different . . .

Crystal: Yeah, they are exactly the same.

Mei: Some of them, they are differences. Right?

Eva: All the differences I hear are mostly their names.

Mei: [interrupting]--the part, wait. When he go get/um/the tasp/um

Crystal: [interrupting]--tapestry?

Leanne: But anyway, it's almost exactly the same because inside, inside the story, um the mother did have three sons, and there was, she was a widow, and there was a

fortune teller in the story, and there was a stone horse in the story, and stuff like that, except for when he--

Eva: [interrupting]--except for when the horse in *Weaving of the Dream* he had to put 10 drops of blood on the horse.

Crystal: The *Enchanted Tapestry* book was sort of different [short pause]

Leanne: The pictures are different and neat . . . bright, real bright [pointing to *Weaving*]

Eva: Sort of like bold

Leanne: [pointing to *Tapestry*] They're like pencil, they're like [short pause]

Eva: Watercolors.

Mei: But they are good pictures

Crystal: They're good pictures, but they're plain. They have, they need bright colors.

This interaction illustrates the role of focusing students' discussion through prompts in their reading logs and reflects improvements in both **how** and **what** the students share during Book Club as they demonstrate turn-taking and respect for each other, provide help to each other when they sense some confusion, focus on the content of the selections as it relates to their own knowledge and opinion, and work collaboratively to co-construct their ideas. In a midwinter conversation between Ginny, one of the researchers, and Deb, Ginny noted that the whole-class, Community Share sessions seemed to benefit the students, saying, "I'm not sure, I think in some ways that's why they're doing so well now, because they had that chance to really learn what it means to communicate, and what they're really trying to do. I think in some ways if they hadn't had the whole-group discussions, I'm not sure they would have been doing what they are now." Deb agreed that the whole-class sessions set up expectations and noted that "they're proud of their Book Clubs, and they should be."

The folktale unit also heightened students' interest in becoming authors. One Community Share activity involved the visit of a local author who was working on a manuscript in the style of a folktale. The author asked students to help her improve the manuscript for children their age. As students critiqued her story and talked with her about the books they had read and their own writing, they expressed interest in writing their own folktales. At their request, Deb provided the time so they could write, illustrate, and share their folktales with each other and with a group of first-grade students.

Randy's folktale (Figure 1) reflects a blend of ideas from the many sources over the unit, as well as sources that he found influential. When interviewed about where he got his ideas, he said,

> I watched a movie about this story that didn't have much money. I didn't copy off of it, it's just that I had this movie and I just started, as I wrote down, getting more ideas. I just made up a little boy that didn't have much family, that didn't have much money, only had one friend. It's kind of a sad story. In the top and in the middle, but later it's happy because he found, because he found a piece of gold. And I think, the other book about the tapestry, you know, the book about the tapestry? They found something that would make them rich. I got a few ideas from that. . . . This fairy tale, way, like in 19, 1903 or something. I just got the idea of Shaka, they didn't have much money. . . . It's in Africa. That's where I got the place from. . . . I got that book over there [points to the library corner] and I said, Oh yes, I can have this in Africa, so I got that, then *Weaving of the Dream*, then *The Color Purple*, so I just put it together to make a few characters, to make him not have much friends, he only had one friend because they lived in a big field and everybody lived on some other land . . .

From his explanation, we can see Randy's integration of ideas from several sources: his internalization of features of folktales such as initial adversity followed by just rewards and his recognition of elements such as characters and setting as critical to the tale.

Such activities progressed over the course of the academic year as students moved through theme units about World War II and Japan, folktales from around the world, World War II in Europe, and Biographies. Generally, students in the class read at least one book in common,

Figure 1. Randy's folktale.

The Gold Rush

Once upon a time there lived the Henderson family. There were Aunt Ema, Uncle Chuck, Cusion Bill, and Anthony. The family did'nt have much money. they lived on A farm in Africa on a large field by the woods. Anthony only had one friend and his name was Danny. The to were very nice to each other. One day while Anthony and his family were sittingat the table eating breakfast, Anthony said, Aunt Ema what happened to my motherand my father. Aunt Ema just bursted out with tears. And she went to her room anhd slamed the door. What is wrong with her Anthony asked. Uncle Chuck and Cusion Bill just stared at Anthony with water in there eyes. Anthony wanted to cry but he did'nt. So Anthony went out and fed the cattle. While Anthony fed the cattle he saw Danny running up to him saying! Rich I Rich. Danny ran up to him and said you would'nt just believe what just happened to me, What happened Anthony said. Well when my mother was planting food she saw three big pieces of gold. Danny said. Wow that Is great. Let me go tell my family, Anthony said. So when he got there he told his family quickly. After he got telling his family they all decided to go over to Danny's house. But when they got there they were gone. Ge whiz we will never get off of this old farm, Anthony said. Oh what I just found, It's a big piece of gold. Now we can get off of this farm. THE END

while individual copies of books related by theme, author, or genre were available in the classroom library. Deb struggled with the issue of providing students with a choice, while feeling a need to maintain some control over the options for content of instruction. To address this tension, she chose to provide limits for some of the choices she had given the students, while allowing them input into the book selection whenever possible.

For each unit, Deb selected one to three book sets (of 10 - 30 books) from those available in the district, and selected from the school and public library books that related to the general theme of the unit. In making these decisions, she let the class decide on a genre (e.g., folktales) to read during Book Club, the district resources determined which sets of books could be used, and then individual students could make their selection from a constrained set of 2 to 3 books available from their district for Book Club. In addition to the Book Club **required** book, students could choose from the Book Club **related** and other library books for their free reading.

TEACHING IDEA--Students have increased motivation to read a book when they are able to participate in the selection. It is often helpful to have the class or groups reading the same book but to allow students to have some voice in the selection. Give students a questionnaire which asks them what they would like to read. Examples include

(1) Now that we are almost finished with our current book, it is time to begin thinking about our next book. We would like to read something which is of interest to most of the class. Please indicate below which general topics you find interesting. (Provide list with topics such as folktales, fantasy, specific author, etc.)

(2) Ask questions:
- What are some of your favorite kinds of books?
- Who are your favorite authors?
-If you were to recommend a book to a friend, what book would you tell them to read?

In identifying skills on which to focus, Deb drew on her knowledge of reading (i.e., from her teacher education program, the district guidelines, and the scope and sequence chart of the district-adopted basal reader) and her knowledge of collaborative grouping. She expressed concern early in the year about their questioning abilities, saying, "I want them to develop better questioning skills, they've gotten to a point where they'll ask, 'What do you mean by that?' but they have much more to learn." She thought about how questioning abilities might relate to the composition of the Book Clubs, "their oral language, how they speak and listen, making [the Book Clubs] as heterogenous as possible, test out mixes in case a group has someone too dominant."

The focus on **how to share**, particularly how to ask questions of one another, occurred over the year, through Deb's modeling during Community Share and through students' analysis of their own Book Clubs (e.g., on video- or audiotape). In mid-November, we began to see that children had internalized one form of questioning, asking for information. The following Book Club occurred after students mapped characters from *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ear*:

Crystal: Jean, let's hear from you.

Jean: Okay, but don't laugh. The mosquito talked too much.

Crystal: Yeah, Larissa, what's first on your map?

Larissa: The branch fell . . . said it was the crow's fault.

Crystal: It was the crow. Tremaine, what's yours? Let's hear about it.

Tremaine: I did the iguana. It had sticks in ears and walked in the forest.

Larissa: Why did it walk in the forest?

Tremaine: It got tired of the mosquito nonsense.

This discussion is certainly an improvement over the "Talk, Joshua, talk" discussion (on p. 1) in early October but not quite as strong as the one comparing *Weaving of a Dream* and

Enchanted Tapestry that occurred somewhat later in the folktale unit. Crystal and her peers had the opportunity to share; they showed respect for what each person had to say and talked of specific parts of the text. However, while there were improvements in **how to share**, there was little elaboration, questions and answers were shallow, and little personal response and no relations were made to experiences outside the text. Crystal was assuming a "teacher role," of directing the group, rather than allowing students to assume collaborative roles. Further modeling and analysis occurred to address these issues and changes were observed over the course of the following months.

We noticed that interactions were affected by the group membership, and Deb shifted groups to find a good balance, based on the leadership, communication, and social skills of the students. For example, Jennifer appeared to be "shut out" of discussion by a more dominant girl in her group, a fact that she was quite aware of as she described in an interview several months later, "she was getting on everyone's case 'cause they wouldn't be doing nothing right and would get too slow so she was trying to be the leader." Joshua, the student that had refused to talk at all in the October discussion, needed support beyond being ordered to talk. He, Randy, and Jeffrey comprised a Book Club for the folktale unit. Their interactions show the results of careful grouping and the effects of engaging in a variety of comprehension and synthesis activities in their reading logs. Notice both the increased range and depth of questions asked.

Jeffrey: I'd like to talk about the youngest son. I liked him because, um, he didn't lie and, um, didn't do all the bad things, like the brothers, 'cause the brothers went to town and got the gold instead of trying to help their mother.

Randy: What bad things did the other brothers do?

Jeffrey: They um went to the stone house where the stone horse is and instead of taking the horse, knocking out their two front teeth, they went and got the gold and went to town instead of helping their family.

Jennifer: OK, if you were in that, uh, if you were in that situation, what would you do?

Jeffrey: [pause . . .] Trust my youngest son

Joshua: Trust all three of them, but the youngest son was the best

Jennifer: What if he tr . . . what if he, like, What if he trusted the oldest one; that the oldest one was the one he trusted?

Jeffrey: Um . . . I trusted, um, I would have trusted all of them, but he, when he left he never came back, he went to the other city.

Jennifer: [interrupting]--I mean, what if he didn't know that the oldest one was really for you to trust? and you never found out? and then you would, and then you would think that the youngest one did all the bad things?

Jeffrey: I would just disagree with the boy if I was the mother. . . . I would just disagree with the boy, with the two big boys.

Randy: How could the mother discipline them?

Jeffrey: Yeah, when she didn't even know about it.

Randy: Yeah, how could she discipline them?

Jeffrey: She couldn't discipline them. They went to town and took all the gold. But at the end of the story, I think they came back.

Jennifer: I want to talk about the um first episode when they go to the land far east when that lady and her two sons?

While we could still see ways to improve, it was clear that students were growing in important ways in **what to share**. First, all students had begun to participate, even quiet Joshua, and their responses were not the rote readings from their reading logs. Second, the students gave personal responses when Jennifer wondered how one of them might act in that situation and when they discussed what disciplines might be appropriate. Third, there was balance between text and outside text discussion and consideration of specific sections of the plot: from Randy's request for a summary at the beginning of this segment, to their discussion of trust and hypothesizing different outcomes, to Jeffrey's comment about the older brothers

returning. Issues of trust and discipline formed themes central to the discussion. The Book Club's comparing and contrasting *Weaving . . .* and *Tapestry* (on pp. 10-12) further illustrate students' improved focus on both **how** and **what** to share.

Finally, an example from an April Book Club session reveals how students internalized the in-depth questioning that Deb modeled frequently when scaffolding students' interactions during Community Share. For example, when Deb asked students to think about what features characterized folktales, she modeled how to probe for further information, using general prompts such as, "Tell me more about that." "Can you explain that?" "What kind?" She also elicited more specific information, as in the following exchange.

Jarrod: [Folktales have] a problem.

Deb: Can you think of a problem we have read about?

Jarrod: When the man goes through the ice.

Jennifer: In *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears* there was a problem because it kept going on and on and made people angry.

Helena: The lesson is taught in the story.

Deb: What lesson?

Helena: Don't tell secrets.

The modeling that Deb had done over the course of the semester began to have results, as you can see in the following exchange in April between Jennifer and Angela. Jennifer both probes and supports Angela, a student who frequently experiences comprehension difficulties, in her struggle to clarify a point about the astronauts in Sally Ride's book *To Space and Back*:

Richard: Angela, let's hear yours.

Angela: It will be scary.

Jennifer: Why do you think it will be scary?

Angela: Because they leave the earth.

Jennifer: Why would you be scared to leave the earth?

Angela: Because I've never been up so high to know how it would look.

Jennifer: Do you think everything would look small or something?

Angela: Yeah.

Jennifer: Why?

Angela: 'Cause you are in outer space.

This interaction showed growth in Jennifer's ability to question for more information and ask for ideas beyond what is detailed in the text or her reading log.

Concluding Comments

At the beginning of the year, Deb talked about her concerns: Could such a program as Book Club "work" for her students? Could **she** make such a program "work," given her responsibilities to the students, the district requirements, and her students' parents? By spring, Deb expressed both her pleasure with the students' progress and her desire to incorporate the principles of Book Club throughout the school day. Next year, she plans to build on Book Club in social studies and science.

Deb has also described differences in students' attitudes in terms of both their literacy attitudes and development and their self-esteem. One source of evidence she cites is their weekly trip to the library. "You should see them when they go to the library now. They used to come back, and I can remember at the beginning of the year, their saying 'I don't want a book, so what, I don't have to have a book.' Now I hear, 'Ms. Woodman! Ms. Woodman! Look at the book I got, it's a folktale, . . . it's like, whatever we're doing, they'll look for and if they find it, they run back to me. I would say one, two, even three [students] . . . somebody searches for a book pertaining to Book Club. They're really excited about reading."

Deb attributed part of students' excitement, and much of their self-esteem, to the heterogenous nature of the Book Clubs, saying, "You're talking about last year, a child was in the lowest reading book and that child was, throughout the year, reminded that he is way behind somebody else. This year, he feels he has gained so many important life skills . . . and pulled him up on the same level as some of those higher kids, the ones who were in the highest book last year." About another child she noted,

> She is so confident . . . she's always been in the lowest groups. Look at her this year! She's so confident, she was even in the speech contest. . . . She knew what she wanted to say, she said it well. . . . She's come so far, and she feels good. She's experienced success and is gaining so many skills.

In a conversation with Taffy about how students of higher abilities were doing in the heterogenous groupings, Deb indicated that she felt they too, had experienced success. She noted that "They've just gained or added to the confidence they previously had, and felt like they were a valuable contribution. I can see that, from time to time, they might have thought 'I'm the one who keeps this together, and I'm the one who does a nice job.'"

Finally, Deb felt that the students' excitement was revealed in their attitudes at home. During parent conferences, Deb drew on the students' Reading Logs and other writing samples to form the basis of her report to the parents. Deb told others on the research team that when she began to explain Book Club, that she was often stopped by parents who said, "Oh, we know all about, . . ." mentioning some of the students' favorite characters and books. Deb said of the parents during conferences, "They seemed excited, and I think that excitement was carried over from when the kids went home, . . . I don't think they would have been solely convinced on just what I said."

We saw a lot of progress made by the students when we thought about our original three goals of literacy instruction. The first goal--students showing enjoyment, understanding, and

choosing to engage in the activities--was easily seen in their excitement. For example, one day when a number of extra book about folktales were brought into the room, students quickly selected from these new books those that they wanted to read during SSR. One student exclaimed, "This is just like Christmas!" A second example occurred when one of the children was hospitalized for three weeks with a broken leg, after being hit by a car. When Deb visited him on his first evening in the hospital, he asked her if his Book Club could visit him to talk about their current book.

Meeting our second goal--helping students learn to acquire, synthesize, and evaluate information from text--was apparent in all the students' progress, specifically shown in Randy's folktale, the later Book Club discussions, and their reading logs. We saw students frequently referring to books read earlier in the year, to ideas from other students within and outside their Book Clubs, and to books and media sources outside the Book Club program. They learned to critique, compare and contrast, and identify themes across multiple books.

The success of the third goal--developing a language to talk about literacy--was apparent in the many examples of the students' small-group and whole-class discussions. From the limited voice of "Talk, Joshua, talk!" and "you copycat," we saw students mature into thoughtful and articulate participants in discussions about books. There was ample evidence that the students all demonstrated an ability to engage in "a serious conversation about a book," one of Deb's earlier concerns. They critiqued illustrations, plots, and character descriptions; asked questions of author's motives for writing and of each other's interpretations of story events; created dramatic interpretations of books they had read; and discussed each other's written texts.

In short, the structure of Book Club provided Deb with much of the support she needed to create a literacy environment in which students read high-quality literature, learned to

respond to the literature in multiple ways, and developed an appreciation for the experience. The fourth-graders, given opportunity, appropriate instructional support, good literature and nonfiction selections, and an integrated literacy program, not only became active members in a literary community they developed the strategies, skills, and inclination potentially to continue this development throughout their school careers and beyond.

References

Aardema, V. (1975). *Why mosquitoes buzz in people's ears* [Leo and Diane Dillon, Illustrators]. New York: Dial.

Aardema, V. (1981). *Bringing the rain to Kapiti Plain* [Beatriz Vidal, Illustrator]. New York: Dial.

Au, K. H., Scheu, J. A., Kawakami, A. J., & Herman, P. A. (1990). Assessment and accountability in a whole literacy curriculum. *The Reading Teacher, 43*, 574-578.

Clement, C. (1986). *The painter and the wild swans* [Frederic Clement, Illustrator]. New York: Dial.

Coerr, E. (1977). *Sadako and the thousand cranes.* New York: Dell.

Fitzgerald, S. (in press). Enriching oral language through literature. In B. E. Cullinan (Ed.), *Literature across the curriculum: Making it happen.* Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Graves, D. H., & Hansen, J. (1983). The author's chair. *Language Arts, 60*, 176-183.

Heyer, M. (1986). *The weaving of a dream.* New York: Puffin.

Lowry, L. (1989). *Number the stars.* New York: Dell.

McMahon, S. I., & Raphael, T. E. (1990, December). *Creating an environment to encourage classroom discourse about text: A preliminary investigation.* Paper presented at the National Reading Conference, Miami, FL.

Ride, S., & Okie, S. (1986). *To space and back.* New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard.

San Souci, R. (1987). *The enchanted tapestry* [Laszlo Gal, Illustrator]. New York: Dial.

Shanahan, T., & Lomax, R. (1986). An analysis and comparison of theoretical models of the reading-writing relationship. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 78*, 116-123.

Short, K. G., & Pierce, K. M. (1990). *Talking about books: Creating literate communities.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Smith, F. (1988). *Joining the literacy club: Further essays into education.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Boynton/Cook.

Tierney, R. J., & Pearson, P. D. (1983). Toward a composing model of reading. In J. M. Jensen (Ed.), *Composing and comprehending* (pp. 33-45). Urbana, IL: ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills.

Tierney, R. J., & LaZansky, J. M. (1980). The rights and responsibilities of readers and writers: A contractual agreement. *Language Arts, 57*, 606-613.